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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE 1709  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1076  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1778  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0744  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2357  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2675  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 1260  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 1177  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS ASTANA 001104

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: ALMATY NOTES, JUNE 15-26

¶1. The "Almaty Notes" series from U.S. Office Almaty focuses on developments in civil society, the media, and the opposition in Kazakhstan's "southern capital."

LUKEWARM RESPONSE TO AZAT'S CALL FOR A MERGER

¶2. Bulat Abilov, the leader of the opposition Azat party, publicly hailed the recently-formed block of opposition parties, which is comprised of the National Democratic Party (OSDP), the unregistered Alga Party, and the Communist Party. He stressed his priority is Azat's full merger with OSDP, and claimed that negotiations about the merger are already underway. His opposition colleagues, however, do not seem to share his enthusiasm. Communist leader Serikbolsyn Abdildin told the newspaper "Obshestvennaya Pozitsiya" that Abilov simply "wants other parties to join Azat." It is difficult for the Communist Party to find common ground with the "bourgeois Azat," asserted Abdildin, adding that the newly-formed opposition bloc is a compromise that works for all involved.

WORKERS GO ON STRIKE OVER UNPAID WAGES

¶3. On June 22, about 1,500 employees of the Almaty Railroad Car Repair Factory suspended their work for two hours to protest against unpaid salaries. The employees protested their low wages and a recent cut in vacation time, as well as a lack of proper work equipment. The protest action ended before noon but the workers promised to resume the action if their demands were not satisfied.

NGO COALITION AGAINST TORTURE

¶4. Several NGOs -- including the Kazakhstan Bureau for Human Rights, the Charter for Human Rights, the Legal Policy Research Center and the International MediaNet Center -- have established a new coalition called "Fight against Torture." The coalition will provide consultations for free and assist victims of torture in filing complaints. During this past year, representatives of the Charter for Human Rights plan to conduct inspections of police detention cells. According to the new coalition's statistics, from April 2007 through January 2009, there were 586 cases when detainees were subjected to torture.

DIRTY ROAD POLICE EXPOSED

15. On June 23, the Almaty department of the National Security Committee (KNB) reported the uncovering of a criminal ring in the ranks of the city road police. Members of the ring were involved in forging driving licenses and accident records. The KNB has revealed 63 forged records filed by 53 police officers. A probe has been launched.

HOAGLAND